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## GOVERNOR O'MALLEY EXPANDS MARYLAND CONSERVATION CORPS

*New Civic Justice Corps Offers Meaningful Summer Conservation Work to At-risk Youth*

**CATONSVILLE, MD (April 24, 2008)** – One day after signing legislation that protects Maryland's environment, the health of the Chesapeake Bay, and helps secure Maryland's energy future, Governor Martin O'Malley today announced the expansion of the Maryland Conservation Corps (MCC) – the state's award winning AmeriCorps program – to include a summer job program for underserved and court-involved youth.

"Our new Civic Justice Corps will create paid summer jobs and meaningful outdoor experiences for at-risk youth, while contributing to the preservation and restoration of our state parks," said Governor O'Malley. "These young people will not only learn the value and benefits of service and find a connection with nature; they will also develop job skills to prepare them for our increasingly green economy."

Joined by Lt. Governor Anthony Brown, Department of Natural Resources Secretary John Griffin and Department of Juvenile Services Secretary Donald DeVore, Governor O'Malley made the announcement at Patapsco Valley State Park, where he participated in stream monitoring activities with 35 Franklin Square Elementary School students from Baltimore City. The Governor joined the students on the second-day of a field trip that included an overnight camp-out, hiking, bird watching, and hands-on service learning activities. After surveying stream health of the Sawmill Branch, the students planned to survey an urban stream, to compare and contrast with Sawmill Branch and identify ways they can help improve the quality of streams within their own backyard.

"Students of all ages all across Maryland have accepted the challenge to protect our environment against global warming and over-consumption," Lt. Governor Brown said. "We would be wise to follow the examples of our children to ensure that the Bay, the wetlands and the open space we enjoy still remain for future generations to come."

The new Civic Justice Corps program, which will be managed by the Maryland Park Service, kicks off this summer with 200 at-risk youth from Baltimore City. Corps members are being recruited with the help of several Maryland Department of Natural Resources partners, including the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services and the Parks and People Foundation. The Maryland Park Service hopes to expand the Corps to other parts of the state and increase capacity in future summers.

"Replicating this National Model in partnership with DNR and DJS offers a great opportunity for at risk youth," said Department of Juvenile Services Secretary Donald DeVore. "This proven model reduces recidivism and provides participating youth with a unique and meaningful experience in our State Parks. These youth get the opportunity to earn money, learn more about our environment and assist in the beautification of Maryland."

MCC AmeriCorps members and state park staff will lead projects and provide mentoring for the 24 CJC crews of 8 youth each at Patapsco Valley State Park and Gunpowder Falls State Park. Their projects will include resource conservation, trail maintenance, forest buffers planting, with training focused on team building and job

skills. CJC crewmembers will also learn about the environment by participating in hands-on outdoor activities including hiking, canoeing, camping and art work.

“Maryland’s children are losing their connection with our natural world, an alienation that threatens the future of our natural resources and the quality of life for future citizens,” said Department of Natural Resources Secretary John Griffin. “Spending time outdoors is the best way to develop a connection to nature, and the foundation on which to build an environmental stewardship ethic.”

Building on the federal Civilian Conservation Corps established 75 years ago, and the modern AmeriCorps, the Maryland Conservation Corps and the new Civic Justice Corps will engage young adults in extensive natural resource management and park conservation projects. Managed by the Maryland Park Service since 1984, MCC provides members with opportunities for skill development and personal growth through a supportive, team-based environment, emphasizing the satisfaction of completing projects that benefit Maryland’s natural resources.

Earlier this week, Governor O’Malley signed an Executive Order establishing the Maryland Partnership for Children in Nature, a coalition of state, local, private and non-profit partners charged with promoting the well-being of youth by accelerating environmental learning and expanding opportunities for outdoor learning and enjoyment.

Over the course of this month, Governor O’Malley participated in a number of environmental events in celebration of Earth Week, including a groundbreaking at the Masonville Cove Environmental Education Center, a restoration project that will transform one of Baltimore Harbor’s most contaminated sites into an area that will benefit wildlife, local residents, and the port industry, and testifying in support of the federal No Child Left Inside Act at the U.S. House Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education’s field hearing.

Governor O’Malley also announced that public lands managed by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources will not be considered as sites for commercial wind power generation and that public land will continue to be managed for the essential environmental, recreational and economic values they provide for all of Maryland’s families and future generations. In addition, Governor O’Malley joined Virginia Governor Kaine to announce their commitment to work together to rebuild the Chesapeake Bay’s beleaguered blue crab population by directing our regulatory agencies to take immediate steps to reduce the 2008 female harvest of blue crabs by 34 percent, and to develop long-term management strategies to ensure that the blue crab and the economy it supports continue to be an important part of our culture for generations to come.

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